

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Lt. General Mobutu Sese Seko, President of Zaire
Nguza Karl-i-Bond, State Commissioner for
Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Bofossa Wambea Nkoso, State Commissioner for
Finances

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
William E. Schaufele, Jr., Assistant Secretary of
State for African Affairs
Amb. Walter Cutler, American Ambassador to
Zaire
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff *pm2*

DATE AND TIME:

Friday, April 30, 1976
7:45 - 8:23 a.m. [breakfast]

PLACE:

The President's Palace
Kinshasa, Zaire

[The President greeted the Secretary. They posed for photos and took their seats.]

Kissinger: Yesterday I was not feeling well.

Mobutu: Yes, I know.

Kissinger: I want to thank you not only for the excellent technical arrangements but for the warmth of the human reception.

Mobutu: Yes, it was a day devoted to detente. When we use that word in Zaire, it's not signing documents or negotiating.

Kissinger: It's relaxation ! When the President comes to the United States, we do our best, but we don't have the same tradition of hospitality. And we have no Marble Palace.

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[The party moved out to the patio where the breakfast table was set.]

Kissinger: This is beautiful. Is that Brazzaville over there?

Mobutu: Yes.

Kissinger: It is excellent arrangements of the Foreign Minister. What did you tell our press, Mr. President?

Mobutu: I answered their curiosity.

Kissinger: Dare I go on the plane? [Laughter]

Mobutu: They are not diplomats, because the Washington Post representative was dean of the press corps, and he thanked me at the end.

Kissinger: That is more than they do for me! What did they ask?

Mobutu: About Angola. Have you been informed that President Nyerere is in Oslo congratulating the United States for the speech?

Kissinger: I haven't heard. That is a good development, don't you think?

Mobutu: Yes. In my press conference I referred to it. TASS is very violent.

Kissinger: Yes, that I have seen.

Mobutu: Every day.

Kissinger: We must be doing something right. [Laughter]

[The helicopter arrives and parks on the heli pad on the slope below.]

Mobutu: When I got here, it was funny to see your bodyguards looking through the shrubs and the bushes. [Laughter]

Kissinger: They wanted to see where the microphones are hidden! In Moscow, there are antennas in the trees in the garden. If you ever go to Moscow, Mr. President.

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SECRET/NOFORN/XGDS

- 3 -

I wanted to sum up, Mr. President, because there is not much time. If you agree.

I agree with what the President said of the importance of Zaire as a symbol for the rest of Africa. And I think also what we are talking about now is not of the right scale. Rockwell will be coming in May. He will be thinking in categories of something like \$30 million for military aid. You should continue with that, but in the meantime I will be discussing in the government a different scale. We are also planning approximately \$45 million for a program of stabilization. What we need is something like what we are trying with Egypt. It will take me to the end of June to get a decision on the Presidential level, because I will be away. But I will also talk to the President of France next week and I will meet in May with leaders of Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany and Belgium. So I hope during the course of the summer we can develop a substantial program of economic and military aid.

Mobutu: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary of State. I think the position of Zaire on security consists of obtaining guarantees immediately, and later some assistance to prepare for the future. We have never been engaged in such a program as you have in the Middle East, but this is necessary to calm the situation. There are 300 tanks in Angola -- T-54, T-34. Also helicopter gunships, about sixty. We have nothing like that. We will wait to see what happens. The immediate problem is that.

Kissinger: I understand this. This is the immediate problem. We have a number of obstacles to overcome in America. The retired Protestant missionaries who constitute our African bureau don't believe in military aid. But I will overcome them. Secondly, we have to avoid turning it into a heavy bureaucratic exercise, and for this we have to move it to the National Security Council to get it as a decision by the President.

I am taking that singer with me, who sang the other night. A Presidential gift!

Mobutu: We have another, who is more authentic, more African. That is the difference.

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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SECRET/NOFORN

- 4 -

Kissinger: Name her Ambassador to Washington, and you will have no problem.

Mobutu: In your Bicentennial festivities, we will be sending that group [the National Ballet, which the Secretary had seen the night before].

Kissinger: That group was fantastic.

Cutler: Part of that group is going to the United States. But I would like to get the whole group. All eighty.

Kissinger: I think you need the whole group.

Mobutu: The animation?

Nguza: The ballet.

Kissinger: They were really magnificent.

Cutler: You need all of them for the impact.

Mobutu: There are eight. To have only 27.....

Kissinger: It was the most sophisticated dancing I have seen since I have been in Africa. There was a plot. I have yet to be in an African state where they say anything good about another state, but all agree Zairean dancing is the best. [Laughter]

What we did with Egypt is to appoint Mr. Robinson to go to other countries to organize assistance. I will talk to the British and West Germans, and also to the Shah of Iran, who is a friend of mine, and also Saudi Arabia. Have you met the Shah?

Mobutu: Yes. I was there in January 1975.

Kissinger: Because he thinks well of Zaire. On the military, we have to make a serious decision in Washington, and I am sure we will make it. Our Ambassador will tell you I don't specialize in losing bureaucratic fights. Realistically, it will take until the first of July. Meantime, you have the Rockwell mission.

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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- 5 -

Mobutu: This is my position. The Rockwell mission is preparatory to preparing for the long-term security of Zaire. But there are a few things, like tanks, that are an immediate problem. I am glad that you will bring this to the National Security Council. If they tried to come across the river, we could fire on them. We could make an immediate reaction. But the mouth of the river could be closed by the Russians and Cubans there, and we would have no harbor for our exports and imports. What can we do to guarantee our exports and imports through that river? This is what I am concerned about.

Here you see at least what is our guarantee. But with Angola, with 300 tanks, 60 helicopters, and a 2,500-kilometer border with us. Psychology makes this important.

We have strong friends, and they have to reinforce our morale.

Kissinger: I agree, and we will do it. I would like to send the Deputy Secretary of Defense here, and also a general like General Adams. Adams no longer has this command.

Mobutu: The command is now in Tampa, Florida, I think.

Kissinger: We will work it out.

Mobutu: Because I have to convince you and your colleagues to defuse Zaire's problem. In the long run it's psychology, and the morale of the troops. But the immediate problem is how to prevent the choking off of the river.

Kissinger: I understand. What did the press say? They will ask me all the same questions.

Mobutu: They said among other things: "You talked to the Secretary of State about a military aid increase." I said: "We can't talk about an increase, because America has a long relationship with us. I spoke about a strengthening of Zairean military security." I said, "America is a country of honor and I know she will live up to her commitment."

Kissinger: I will say to the press that we have made no decision and you simply described your situation. So you understand. Because I don't want any debate in America while I am here. I don't want all

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E.O. 12958, as amended
May 4, 2006

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- 6 -

the Church services on Sunday....[Laughter] I can handle it once I am back. The President can call in the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of Defense separately and then we can handle it. So I will make very noncommittal statements on this trip. I will say we will study your considerations. I will say this so you are not surprised. But I will say I am sympathetic to your concerns.

Mobutu: Thank you very much. How long is your flight?

Kissinger: Four and a half hours. I will get there about noon. I don't think it is of global importance.

Mobutu: You can spend some time at the table.

Kissinger: We have an Ambassador in Ghana who is a former movie actress. She is not used to being rejected. She's declared war on the Government of Ghana. [Laughter]. I couldn't have gone there anyway.

Mobutu: You needed the rest.

[A plane flies overhead.]

Kissinger: Is that Air Zaire? [Mobutu nods yes.]

There are foreign embassies now in Luanda?

Cutler: Yes.

Kissinger: They permitted the French and Western ones to establish relations?

Schaufele: Brazil was there first.

Mobutu: The Portuguese have recalled their chargé.

Kissinger: You have an embassy there?

Mobutu: We had a Consulate, but it was closed because of the difficulties.

Kissinger: What do you think of Neto?

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May 4, 2006

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SECRET/NOFORN/NOGDS

- 7 -

Mobutu: I have never had any particular sympathy for him. I think it is reciprocated!

Kissinger: But is he a man of ability?

Mobutu: I would give him a failing grade as a statesman. He may be a good doctor, but not a statesman.

Kissinger: Is he in control of his government?

Mobutu: I think so. I heard from a reliable source--it may be a legend, but I am told he asked the Soviet Union for economic help because of all the economic damage, but the Soviet Union said: "Our efforts were to put you at the head of the government. For economic aid, turn to others." And he was very disappointed at this.

Kissinger: Can I see the President for five minutes alone?

[Secretary Kissinger and President Mobutu talked alone from 8:18 to 8:23 a.m. The Secretary then proceeded to the helipad on the lawn and boarded the helicopter for the airport. The helicopter took off, with President Mobutu waving goodbye from his upper balcony.]